

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 3025

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, SOPN, CSCE, UR, US
SUBJECT: ARBATOV COMMENTS ON USIA AND VOA

1. USA INSTITUTE DIRECTOR G.A. ARBATOV GAVE LENGTHY AND WIDE-RANGING INTERVIEWS THIS PAST WEEK TO MOSCOW CORRESPONDENTS OF U.S. NEWS AND WORLD REPORT (FEBRUARY 28) AND NEWSWEEK (MARCH 3). EMBASSY HAS HAD ACCESS TO TAPES AND/OR TRANSCRIPTS OF BOTH INTERVIEWS.

2. IN EACH CASE, ARBATOV ENGAGED IN GENERAL TOUR D' HORIZON OF SOVIET-AMERICAN RELATIONS, TOUCHING ON ARMS CONTROL, TRADE AND HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES. IN LATTER CONTEXT, WE FIND IT NOTEWORTHY THAT ARBATOV, WHOSE CREDENTIALS AS A SEMI-OFFICIAL SPOKESMAN FOR THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP ARE WELL ESTABLISHED, PICKS UP ON RECENT MEDIA CRITICISM OF USIA AND VOA IN PUBLICIZING HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN SOVIET UNION AND EASTERN EUROPE.

3. ARBATOV SPEAKS OF ROLE OF WESTERN MASS MEDIA, WHICH HE FEELS SHOULD BE "MORE RESPONSIBLE", BUT HE PLACES STRONGER EMPHASIS ON WHAT HE SEES AS "A GOVERNMENTAL EFFORT" WHICH "CREATES AN IMPRESSION OF A PLANNED BROAD AND HOSTILE CAMPAIGN" TO RESURRECT COLD WAR TECHNIQUES AND MEDDLE IN SOVIET
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INTERNAL AFFAIRS. HE CITES USIA, VOA AND RADIO LIBERTY AS INSTRUMENTS IN THIS "ESSENTIALLY HOSTILE" CAMPAIGN. UNLIKE CRUDE SOVIET COMMENTATORS, ARBATOV DRAWS CAREFUL DISTINCTION BETWEEN RIGHT OF THE PRESIDENT OR MASS MEDIA TO EXPRESS THEIR OPINIONS ON THE ONE HAND ("WE DON'T DENY THIS RIGHT TO OTHERS") AND "ORGANIZED...PERSISTENTLY WAGED CAMPAIGN" ON THE OTHER. ALTHOUGH, AS NOTED ABOVE, ARBATOV'S

COMMENTS ON THIS SUBJECT WERE ONLY PART OF LENGTHY INTERVIEWS ON MULTIPLICITY OF TOPICS, HIS SERIOUSNESS CAN BE INFERRED FROM FACT THAT HE RETURNED TO "ORGANIZED CAMPAIGN" THEME AT LEAST FOUR TIMES DURING SESSION WITH U.S. NEWS AND WORLD REPORT'S ROBIN KNIGHT.

4. WE ARE GIVEN TO UNDERSTAND THAT EDITED VERSIONS OF MATERIALS WE HAVE SEEN WILL APPEAR IN U.S. NEWS AND WORLD REPORT EDITION PUBLISHED MARCH 7 AND IN NEWSWEEK ISSUE WHICH COMES OUT MARCH 14. IN VIEW OF FACTS THAT BOTH KNIGHT AND NEWSWEEK'S FRED COLEMAN TAKING SOME CONSIDERABLE PROFESSIONAL RISKS IN ALLOWING US ACCESS TO MATERIALS PRIOR TO EDITING AND PUBLICATION (ESPECIALLY IN CASE OF COLEMAN, SINCE HIS PIECE WILL NOT APPEAR FOR OVER A WEEK) AND THAT EDITED VERSIONS MAY DIFFER SIGNIFICANTLY IN EMPHASIS FROM FULL TRANSCRIPTS, WE ASK ADDRESSEES TO RESPECT CONFIDENTIALITY OF INFORMATION AND SOURCES.
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